

### REMARKS

Claims 1-21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Keith et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,519,973) over Potucek. This ground of rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Examiner seems to be confused about the definition of a "flange". In the context of the present application and as accepted in the art, the terms "web" and "flange" can be exemplified simply by an I-beam in which there are two opposing longitudinal flanges interconnected by a longitudinal web. Keith does disclose longitudinally extended elements (Fig. 5: 60) that are continuous through the connector depth. As such, they are not "flanges" as that term is used in the present application, but should be more accurately characterized as "webs" in order to be consistent with the way in which both such terms are used in the present application and also to be consistent with the way in which such terms are used in the art. Potucek also discloses longitudinal elements (Figs. 15 and 16: 80). However, even if one accepted that these elements could accurately be characterized as flanges (which Applicant seriously questions), they most certainly are not interconnected by longitudinal web elements as required in the claims as originally filed. The attention of the Examiner is directed in particular to the specification of Potucek wherein the so-called "web" is actually described as a "concave bight 99 (column 9, lines 34-43; Fig. 16) that is transverse to the connector axis, not parallel to the axis per the definition of "web" in the present application. Accordingly, as properly applied, neither Keith nor Potucek teach a connector having a body with opposite ends having flanges interconnected by a web as recited in claims 1-21. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the 103(a) rejection of claims 1-21 is respectfully requested.

The remaining rejections are rendered moot in light of the foregoing remarks which are believed to distinguish the independent claims over the Keith and Potucek references.

Claims 22 - 24 have been added to the application in order to more particularly point out and distinctly claim the invention.

The application has been amended to correct minor informalities, to further distinguish the application over the prior art, and to more particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention so as to place the application, as a whole, into a prima facie condition for allowance.

Accordingly, the purpose of the claimed invention is not taught nor suggested by the cited references, nor is there any suggestion or teaching which would lead one skilled in the

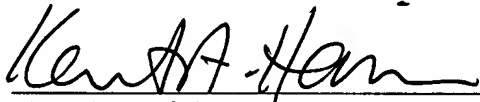
relevant art to combine the references in a manner which would meet the purpose of the claimed invention. Because the cited references, whether considered alone, or in combination with one another, do not teach nor suggest the purpose of the claimed invention, Applicant respectfully submits that the claimed invention patentably distinguishes over the prior art, including the art cited merely of record.

Based on the foregoing, Applicant respectfully submits that its claims 1 - 24 are in condition for allowance at this time, patentably distinguishing over the cited prior art. Accordingly, reconsideration of the application and passage to allowance are respectfully solicited.

The Examiner is respectfully urged to call the undersigned attorney at (515) 288-2500 to discuss the claims in an effort to reach a mutual agreement with respect to claim limitations in the present application which will be effective to define the patentable subject matter if the present claims are not deemed to be adequate for this purpose.

Respectfully submitted,

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